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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

Ten years ago, governments pledged in the Beijing Platform for Action to "revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex." In 1999, Equality Now published a representative sampling of explicitly discriminatory laws from 45 countries. The following year, the Outcome Document of the Special Session of the General Assembly convened to review the Platform for Action established a target date of 2005 for revocation of discriminatory laws. That date is now upon us, yet many explicitly discriminatory laws remain in force.

We are pleased to report that as of January 2005 a number of countries — 14 of 45 — have effectively repealed or amended the discriminatory laws highlighted in Equality Now's 1999 report so as to eliminate the sex discrimination. These countries are the Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, France, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Serbia and Montenegro, Switzerland, Turkey, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). Such reforms set the example for moving from words to action. However, the great majority of laws highlighted remain in force and are included, together with further examples of discriminatory laws from other countries, in Equality Now's updated report, *Words and Deeds—Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing +10 Review Process* (at www.equalitynow.org). Many more exist around the world.

A mechanism is urgently needed to carry forward the process of eliminating legalized discrimination against women. The establishment by the CSW of a Special Rapporteur on Laws that Discriminate Against Women would support and facilitate the continued implementation of the commitment made in the Beijing Platform for Action to revoke these laws. A Special Rapporteur reporting annually to the CSW could accomplish this task in an innovative manner that builds on, and breathes new life into, the Platform for Action. Laws that discriminate against women are a thematic concern well suited for a CSW Special Rapporteur. A Special Rapporteur would allow CSW to highlight ways in which member states have used law reform effectively to counter legal

discrimination against women and would be able to engage in a dialogue with States to promote exchange of information among member States with similar concerns. The Special Rapporteur's work would draw from and supplement the work of CEDAW, as does the Platform for Action.

The appointment of a Special Rapporteur is entirely within the CSW's mandate. In 1968, CSW appointed a Special Rapporteur on the Status of Women and Family Planning who undertook research culminating in a Final Report submitted to the CSW. CSW, like the Commission on Human Rights, should renew its use of this important mechanism, in carrying out its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action. Equality Now and Amnesty International have co-convened a coalition of international, regional, and national organizations in Bangladesh, Egypt, Nepal, Peru, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States that support the creation of a Special Rapporteur on Laws that Discriminate Against Women.

We urge the Commission to demonstrate its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by calling on all States to fulfill their undertaking to eliminate discriminatory laws without further delay.